

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
The Counselor
Washington

October 27, 1952

Dear Frank:

Following our various talks and the subsequent informal discussions between our two offices regarding our draft "Planning Study on the Function and Status of the Political Advisor in a Military Theater of Operations" of February 1, 1952, and the Defense Study cited in Pat Carter's letter of May 14, we have been restudying the political adviser question, this time giving primary attention to the actual problem with which we are currently confronted, namely, the political and politico-military responsibilities involved in the assumption by senior U.S. military commanders of command responsibilities in or under international command structures such as NATO and UNC, and the requisite means of supplying such commanders with appropriate political guidance, assistance and advice. From this point of view it has seemed to me that both our Planning Study and the Defense Study under reference, while containing material of value and interest, have been too narrow and theoretical in their approach to be wholly realistic or applicable to current problems, since both are predicated on the somewhat special and limited hypothesis of future operations conducted by a U.S. military commander in a strictly U.S. Theater of Operations. Such a contingency might conceivably arise, but it has seemed to me preferable in our reexamination of the political adviser question to deal with it on the more realistic basis of its actual aspects and bearing in the broad international context in which U.S. political and military operations and activities abroad are presently being conducted. As a result of this reexamination we have formulated and related a number of the general

considerations

Mr. Frank Nash,
Assistant to the Secretary for
International Security Affairs,
Room 3 E 925, The Pentagon.

~~SECRET~~
~~Security Information~~

~~Security Information~~

-2-

considerations and working assumptions by which the Department is being currently guided in fact, in matters relating to the assignment of political advisers or liaison officers to U.S. military commanders abroad, particularly those having international command responsibilities.

However, before discussing these, I should like to refer briefly to the Defense Study cited in Pat Carter's letter of May 14. Examination of that Study reveals many areas of substantial agreement of view as between the two Departments. Nevertheless, in addition to the general comment expressed above, which applies equally to our own Planning Study of February 1, there are some few points in Pat's letter on which, as a matter of record, I must note our non-concurrence. I refer in particular to subparagraphs d, f, and h. As to these:

d. The language, "The need for the assignment of a political adviser to any particular military commander in the field should be determined by the Department of Defense, which in turn would welcome suggestions or advice from the Department of State in the premises", appears to us ambiguous and misleading, as this would seem a matter for joint State-Defense determination and agreement.

f. The statement that a political adviser to a military commander in the field should serve as a member of the staff of that commander with individual loyalty and responsibility appears to us an oversimplification. Actually the political adviser has the delicate and difficult task of standing in a confidential relationship to the military commander, and also to the Department of State, to both of whom he owes personal loyalty and responsibility.

h. The view expressed in the Defense letter that communications by the political adviser to the Department of State, and by the Department of State to the political adviser, should be made through military channels of communication would appear in direct contradiction to the practice followed throughout the War and the post-war years--

except

~~SECRET~~

~~Security Information~~

Security Information

-3-

except for Japan during the period 1945-48-- and to the practice being followed now, and would largely negate the basic purpose in assigning political officers, which is to afford the Military Commander a means of direct access to the informational and advisory facilities of the Department of State in political matters. (This point is further discussed in sub-paragraph 8 below.)

I believe that it would be fair to say that the seeming differences of view which I have noted are in fact being resolved in actual current practice, on a case by case basis, in a manner which appears satisfactory to both Departments. I am also impressed that the development of international command structures presents, and will continue to present, many novel and unique problems as regards the status and employment of political advisers, which will call in each case for individual consideration. For these reasons, I am in accord with the view of your Department that no doctrine or State-Defense agreement or "treaty" of general application is practicable or necessary at this time to define the functions and status of a political adviser to a U.S. military commander in international commands or other U.S. commands abroad, and I also believe that the mutual purposes of both Departments in these matters will be best served by a continuation of present practices and of the present case by case approach. However, this is not to say that no criteria exist for our guidance in dealing with current problems in this field. On the contrary, there are certain fairly definite general considerations and working assumptions by which the Department is being currently guided in fact in these matters. To summarize briefly:

1) U.S. military operations abroad, particularly those within UN, NATO or other international commands, present unusually complex and far-reaching political problems, which will have to be met in the first instance as command responsibilities by the individual military commanders concerned.

2) The assignment by the U.S. of U.S. military commanders to major command positions in international command structures (or to U.S. commands of international significance such as

USFA)

USFA) places on such commanders personal responsibilities which are political as well as military in character, regardless whether the command be U.S. or international in character.

3) Such assignment also places on the U.S. responsibility for providing the U.S. military commanders concerned with the best possible U.S. political advice and assistance, both from Washington and on the spot.

4) Such political advice and assistance to a U.S. military commander is provided by directives and messages transmitted through command channels, and these in turn may be effectively supplemented by attaching directly to him a civilian political officer, of his own nationality, to act as his personal adviser and assistant on matters of political and politico-military importance in the area of his command responsibility. Generally speaking, it will be advisable for policy reasons for such advisers to avoid use of the title, "Political Adviser", especially those in international commands.

5) In inactive Theaters, or so long as conditions remain reasonably stable politically in the countries in which a particular command is based and operates, it may be convenient to have the U.S. Ambassador to the country concerned, or a designated member of his staff, act as an informal Political Adviser to the U.S. Commander concerned.

6) In active Theaters, particularly where governmental authority and normal diplomatic relations have broken down, it may prove advisable to have a U.S. Political Adviser independent of any Embassy assigned to the U.S. Commander.

7) Matters in which a Political Adviser's services may be of particular usefulness to the Military Commander may include at various times such things as Civil Affairs and Military Government, Psychological Warfare, public relations,

Intelligence

~~SECRET~~

~~Security Information~~

-5-

intelligence evaluation, covert operations, as well as general problems of inter-Allied and international relations in the political and economic fields. However, his relation to such matters should be advisory and consultative in character, and he should not undertake direct operational responsibilities in these fields.

8) The details of political adviser status, functions and facilities are technically matters within the discretion of the Military Commander, but they may in certain aspects involve policy considerations requiring determination in each case at the State-Defense level: as, for example, the relationship in an international command of the political adviser to the international staff; also the question of the Political Adviser's technical channel of communications with the Department of State. As to this last it should be noted that the Department attaches particular importance to the maintenance of a direct and uncensored technical channel of communications between the Political Adviser and the Department (and other diplomatic officers as appropriate) as essential to the effective usefulness of the Political Adviser, and basic to the purposes sought in his assignment; also to his use of Departmental codes for this purpose in the interest of diplomatic security, a factor of special importance in or near international commands. The Department feels that the Political Adviser should not be restricted in these respects except for reasons of overriding military importance, and that in the absence of these, the maintenance of this technical channel should be regarded as the norm. Use of the technical channel by a Political Adviser is coupled with personal responsibility for keeping the Military Commander fully informed of messages sent and received.

9) U.S. Military commanders exercising major national or international command abroad should consider the extent to which they are likely to require U.S. political advice and assistance, both for current needs and for potential future operations, and should make

timely

SECRET

Security Information

~~Security Information~~

-6-

timely requests to have U.S. political advice and assistance made available to them.

10) Determination of the need for the assignment of political advisers or political liaison officers should be made jointly by State and Defense in each individual case, and officers selected for such assignments should be personally acceptable in this capacity to both Departments and to the Military Commander.

11) The Department of State should be prepared to furnish qualified personnel for such Political Adviser assignments as a matter of top priority, and should further consider the extent of the current demands which may be made on it in this respect, and also those which might be made in the event of major military operations.

I have outlined the foregoing general considerations and working assumptions by which the Department is currently being guided in matters relating to the assignment of political advisers, both for the general information of your Department, and also in the hope that it may serve to keep the matter on a basis of continuing consideration and review by both Departments in the light of new experience gained and new problems encountered in the course of the development of the various international command structures. Needless to say, we would welcome the comments of your Department at any time, and would be glad to discuss any and all aspects of political adviser questions, whether general or specific, whenever you so desire, in the interest of further developing our mutual understanding and collaboration in this important field. Accordingly I suggest that our two offices continue to keep in touch on political adviser questions as they arise, as a means of facilitating their joint consideration by the two Departments, and I shall be most interested to have your views in reply to this suggestion.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Charles E. Bohlen

Charles E. Bohlen

~~SECRET~~
~~Security Information~~